THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes. It is a fact that approximately, 7,000 Indians are in foreign jails.

(b) In most cases, the charges are for minor offences such as violation of immigration/visa rules, non-possession of valid travel documents, economic offences, violation of employment contracts or rules concerning employment, etc. There are also a few cases of grave offences relating to drug trafficking, adultery, theft and murder.

(c) Indian Missions/Posts abroad provide all possibile assistance in such cases. This assistance includes consular access, getting Indian nationals released if possible, ensuring that there is no miscarriage of justice, facilitating speedy trials and enabling proper living conditions and treatment in the prisons.

External Affairs Ministers' Level Talks Between India and Pakistan

119. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the specific topics discussed between India and Pakistan at the External Affairs Ministers' level talks at Islamabad and New Delhi, when the two met in August and September last; and

(b) the decisions arrived at as a result thereof and the follow up action taken so far by the two Governments to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) External Affairs Minister, Shri K. Natwar Singh, met the Pakistani leadership, including Foreign Minister Kasuri, during his visit to Islamabad from July 19, to 23,2004 for the SAARC Ministerial Conference. They, *inter alia,* shared perceptions on all aspects of bilateral relations. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the wide range of contacts taking place at governmental and nongovernmental levels between India and Pakistan, and reiterated the importance of continuing the dialogue process in an atmosphere free from violence, and to tackling the scourge of terrorism with renewed vigor.

During their meeting on September 5-6, 2004 in New Delhi, the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan reviewed the overall progress in

the Composite Dialogue, and positively assessed the developments in bilateral relations.

The two Ministers agreed to a number of technical level meetings on various subjects, including, expert level meetings on Conventional and Nuclear CBMs, *inter alia,* to discuss the draft agreement on advance notification of missile tests; meeting between railway authorities on the Munnabao-Khokhraparrail link; meeting between Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Pakistan Rangers; meeting between Narcotics Control Authorities, including for finalisation of an MoU; meeting between the Indian Coast Guards and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency to, *inter alia,* discuss the Memorandum of Understanding for establishing communication link between them; and meeting on all issues related to commencement of a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

They also agreed to the establishment of a Committee of Experts to consider issues related to trade; a Joint Survey of the boundary pillars in the horizontal segment of the international boundary in the Sir Creek area; addition of a new category of Tourist Visa in the visa regime between the two countries, and to promote group tourism; set up a mechanism to deal with the issue of civilian prisoners and fishermen, effectively and speedily, undertake further measures for facilitation of visits to religious shrines, and upkeep of historical sites; implement the outcome of the August 2004 meeting of Defence Secretaries; and enhanced interaction and exchanges among the respective Foreign Offices, including study tours of young diplomats/probationers to each other's country.

The process has been taken forward by high-level meetings and visits, including the meeting between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf in New York on September 24, 2004, and the visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to New Delhi on November 23-24, 2004 in his capacity as the Chairperson of SAARC. The meetings on various subjects that were agreed to by the two Foreign Ministers are scheduled to be held in the first three weeks of December, 2004. Later, the two Foreign Secretaries are expected to meet to initiate the next round of the Composite Dialogue.